



# ABENAKI ACRES FARM

## Winter Newsletter

December 2007

In this Issue

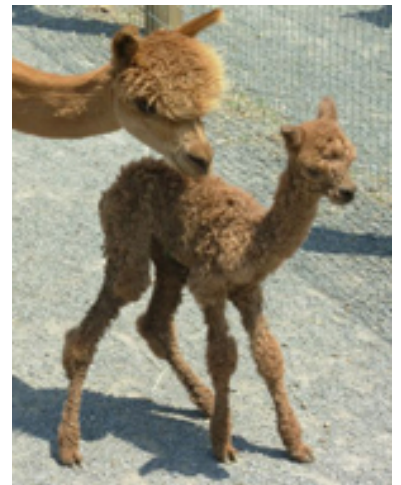
[Kids & Alpacas in School](#) | [Are We Ready?](#) | [Tough Competition in 2007](#)

[More Auction Musings](#) | [Some Production Highlights of 2007](#)



### Are We Ready?

As we moved through the fall and experienced 14 cria that were due in the period of 45 days - my background in computer services disaster recovery and the contingency planning world started me thinking. In prior years we have always been able to handle the births as they occurred and only once did we get stressed (3 cria in 36 hours) by volume. But, as the numbers increase, I realize that the odds increase that multiple things can happen at once. During the weeks leading up to this I also attended a presentation by the NJ Department of Agriculture (by Shari C. Silverman VMD) on being ready for disasters - all of this triggered the same thought process - what do we need to think through and visualize so that we can be better prepared to deal with unexpected situations?



I realize we can't plan for everything and can't have all the supplies in the world, but some of the disciplines that businesses and financial institutions use to protect themselves can be applied to our farm.

Record Keeping - don't delay writing something down - you'll forget - hence, we have small white boards all over the barns so that we can write down observations or events immediately and then transcribe them onto the final forms when we're done with the immediate activity (the birth). Also, make sure the list of actions and questions to ask

## Kids and Alpacas in School

Over the last year we have had the opportunity to introduce alpacas to groups of kids in school settings. Elizabeth really enjoys working with the younger kids at the schools. We are usually able to set up earlier in the day a pen with two alpacas. The program typically consists of a brief lecture on alpacas, a handout of alpaca pictures, coloring pages of alpacas, and a finger puppet. We are also usually allowed to send home flyers on Abenaki Acres Farm as part of the announcement of the event - as a result some parents quite often show up.



Following the lecture, small groups of kids are escorted out to the alpacas where they are allowed to touch them and feed them .

The events have never failed to generate farm and store visits.

We also had several school events at the farm. The one event involving kids that was a real challenge was the result of the NAFD weekend. An eighth grade teacher asked if he could bring his science class over to the farm to learn about alpacas. We agreed upon a topic (Genetics - presented by our vet Meg Campbell) and scheduled the event -- 59 teenagers later we knew our limits! The topic was too long and there were too many kids.

We do remain committed to the school programs - they are fun and achieve our goal of educating the community about alpacas.

are known to all who are likely to birth an animal. In a prior year we were away and forgot to ask our farm sitter if he had cleaned off the teats of the dam and sure enough - he hadn't. As a result the cria was unable to nurse effectively in the first day due to "crud" on the mom's teats and we ended up having to transfuse.

Towels - lots of them - wash them every day if they are used, otherwise you will run out when you need them. Remember the towels get used up quickly, not only in drying and cleaning the cria, but as a cushion for your knees, hand wipes etc.

Oxygen - I decided that one tank was not enough when we are having lots of births in a short span of time - so we obtained a second tank and regulator. Luckily, we have not had to use them both at the same time.

Vehicle - keep a vehicle ready to go - if you don't have a van for transport, make sure your trailer is easy to get to and ready for hook up so that if you have to make a run for the animal clinic you don't lose valuable time. And, you know that by the time you decide you need to go to the vet - it's an emergency and you need to get there quickly!

Refill - as soon as you're done with the current emergency - refill your cria kit - don't run short the next time.

By the way, we never did have multiple births at the same time in 2007 (not counting the premature twins); but, I do feel we're better prepared.

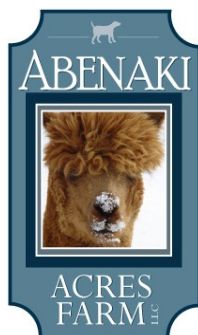
## Abenaki Quick Links...

[Abenaki Acres Farm](#)

[Our Herdsires](#)

[Our Females](#)

[Where are we in 2008?](#)



## More Auction Musings.....

Auctions as a tool for herd growth and marketing. (and fleece development)

In the last newsletter I had included the paragraph below:

"GOING FORWARD:

We see auctions continuing to be part of our growth plans as well as marketing plans, but with a more selective approach. The **quality** of the auction will become paramount to us - and as a result we will continue to maintain a level of herd quality in the upper tiers of the industry."



## Tough Competition in 2007

Tough Competition, Good Results, and  
Why Volunteer

**Spring '07** In the spring of 2007 Abenaki Acres participated in 5 shows. We attended the Carolina Alpaca Celebration, the North American Alpaca Show, The Futurity, MAPACA, and PAOBA and thoroughly enjoyed each one.



**Fall '07** We did 3 shows (Empire, VAOBA, and Vermont) three weekends in a row! VAOBA was a new show for us and we were a little apprehensive because the event was to be outside and under tents. Sure enough as we arrived there was a river running through our tent! Fortunately, the weather dried up enough to enjoy the show.

From a "tough competition" standpoint, The Futurity, MAPACA, Empire and NAAS were the toughest shows (**20+ Get of Sire groups at one of these shows!**). These shows pitted us against some of the largest farms in the country with many entries in the same class. One show we were placed in the Reserve Champion slot and I could see from a distance why the other alpaca was chosen as Champion - again emphasizing the growth in fleece development we need to make.

**Results** Part of our marketing program is to continue to showcase our breeding program, make our herdsires available at silent auctions, and meet a lot of new

Since we published that paragraph we have participated in 7 auctions as sellers and buyers and had some great results on the sale side (and some learned lessons) and wonderful results on the buying/herd development aspects (or high expectations followed by hopefully wonderful results).

1. One of the lessons we learned was not to have two alpacas of the same color in the same sale; your alpacas get penned together and you can't help but create a comparison between the two alpacas of the same color. In this case, one had wonderful conformation, but her fleece suffered by comparison.
2. Another lesson learned revolves around our responsibility around the auction itself. If you are going to place animals in the auction you need to assist the sponsoring organization in getting potential buyers interested and present (even if by phone or internet). Ways to do that include email campaigns, personally inviting people to the auction; use it as a tool to educate new farms about alpaca selection, call people and talk about the auction - if the auction can't generate excitement - buyers will not come; and you need to bring your own potential buyers!
3. One of the factors we also experienced was the weather - in a couple of cases the temperatures were outrageous, the auction audience could not get comfortable and I believe that affected the willingness to participate in the bidding - your focus is not on the auction - it's on the heat (or the cold if the weather goes the other way)
4. The last thing about auctions is that there are not enough buyers being attracted to sustain the number of auctions that occurred in 2007. By spreading the **existing** buyers across that many auctions has reduced the competition for the alpacas in auctions and lowered the prices achieved (on average).



We feel that the three alpacas we acquired represent significant additions to our bloodlines and will help ensure the diversity and quality of our upcoming cria. When we look at the ARI's on AG Midnight Rose and MFI Peruvian Golden Light and their service sires we get excited about the upcoming cria but also know that the female has added to our prime foundation herd. HH Sweet Talkin' Man also brought some new opportunities to us and we will have 4 cria in 2008 from him.

The auctions we bought at were The Futurity, National Elite and Breeders Choice; we sold at Breeders Edge (twice), East Meets West, Carolina Classic and the Eastern Extreme. We bid at all of them but only acquired at the three listed.



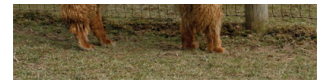
people. To that end, the planning and discussion that goes on between me, Elizabeth and our Farm Manager is continuous. We take feedback from each set of judges and determine which alpacas will go to the next show. We averaged 8 alpacas per show in 2007. As all of us have experienced, we had a wonderful female place in one show and then "walk" in the next show. But overall, we have been pleased with our entries. The "show string" of 8 had at its core, 3 females from our herd sire Renegade, 2 offspring from Online, and an up and coming herd sire (Astrovine) and then the other 2 places were alpacas we wanted to get feedback on. We finished the year with a bang by receiving 4 championship banners (3 halter 1 fleece) in the last show. The two top alpacas of that string went on to breed to each other and we have a confirmed pregnancy in Abenaki Renegade's Morning Glory by MFI Astrovine - can't wait to see the results!

**Help** One major reason we enjoy the shows despite the work is the people we meet at each show; not just the friends we have made, but new farms, show visitors, and established farms that we have not talked to in the past. We also enjoy the camaraderie and spirit of assistance; when we had 5 classes in a row, there was someone there to help; when we had a conflict in the male and female rings, there was someone there to show one of them - a simple thank you seems inadequate, but it is all that is expected in return. What a great set of "competitors"!

That is also a reason we "give back" by volunteering at the shows as Ring Steward or Gate Steward - it is a "gift" that gives back by letting us meet numerous farms and quality animals.

See you in the showring in 2008! North Carolina is our first one.

P.S. We continue to pick up breedings to top end herdsires (including closed herdsires) at the auctions as well. We're trying to decide who to match up with Sunset Hill's Zephyrus and AABC Navigator this spring.



## 5. Production Highlights of 2007





Johnny

Garrison\*

Renegade

Online

Astrovine

## ABENAKI ACRES FARM 2008 HERDSIRES

(AND THERE'S MORE BACK HOME! PH Navigator's Commander\*, Alnanbal, Sowanaki, and more!)

\*Garrison is co-owned with Parris Hill Farm and Commander is co-owned by Parris Hill and Spring Pond Farm

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